The Federal Technology Center

Presents

Responding to RFPs* - Part 1

*Request for Proposal

All you have to do is…

- Find an appropriate RFP
- Read it and decide whether or not to propose
- Provide a responsive proposal
- Submit your proposal on time
- Negotiate an agreement
- Win or lose – get feedback

EASY, Right?!

Part 1 - Overview

- ✓ Find an RFP
- ✓ Review the solicitation and amendments
- ✓ Meet with your team
- ✓ Non-complex RFPs
- ✓ Contract received
- ✓ Contract completion and close-out
- ✓ Follow the format
- ✓ Define the scope of work
- ✓ Develop a proposal strategy

✓Find an RFP

- ## Definition of an RFP*

  A solicitation document used in negotiated procurement when the buyer reserves the right to award without further oral or written negotiation. Only the acceptance of the buyer is required to create a binding contract. The buyer can choose to negotiate further at its option.

  Desktop Guide to Basic Contracting Terms, National Contract Management Association

What are your codes?

- NAICS – North American Industrial Classified Codes (Federal)

  http://www.census.gov/epcd/naics02/naico602.htm

- Standard Industrial Classification codes (State of California)

  http://www.pd.dgs.ca.gov/smbus/certapps.htm#sic1

- Federal Supply Group codes (FSGs)

  http://www.dlis.dla.mil/PDFs/h2.pdf

Ensure Eligibility

- Have you completed all registrations?
  - Central Contractor Registration (Federal)
  - Website registrations

- Have you gotten all certifications you are eligible for?
  - Minority-owned certification (Federal) – i.e. 8(a)

Search for Solicitations

- Most agencies post solicitations on their website
- Become familiar with the agencies you want to do business with
  - www.fedbizopps.gov (Federal)
  - http://www.cscr.dgs.ca.gov/cscr/ (State of California)
  - Many more
- Use a Bid-Matching service
  - http://www.TheFTC.org/smallbussrvcs/contracting assistance/bidmatching/bidmatching.htm

✓Review the Solicitation

- Purpose of the review is to reach a "propose/no propose" decision
- Determine if there is a history of past contracts for this work and request it from the contracting officer or buyer. Information includes:
    - Dates of previous contracts
    - Name of contractor
    - Quantity purchased
    - Unit price
    - Total price

RFP Format

- Does the agency have a predetermined format?

- With or without one, basic subject matter is the same
  - Schedule (description and your price)
  - Terms and Conditions
  - Instructions

RFP Format (Cont.)

- Follow JPL's format
- The basic subject matter includes
  - Schedule (description and your price)
  - Terms and Conditions
  - Instructions

Uniform Contract Format - FAR 15.204-1(b)

Part I -- The Schedule

A. Solicitation/contract form

B. Supplies or services and prices

C. Description/specifications

D. Packaging and marking

E. Inspection and acceptance

F. Deliveries or performance

G. Contract administration data

H. Special contract requirements

Part II -- Contract Clauses

I. Contract clauses

Part III -- List of Documents, Exhibits, and Other Attachments

J. List of documents, exhibits, and other attachments

Uniform Contract Format - FAR 15.204-1(b)

Part IV – Representations and Instructions

K. Representations, certifications, and other statements of offerors (Jan 1 2005, replaced by ORCA*)

L. Instructions, conditions and notices to offerors or respondents

M. Evaluation factors for award

– Always read first!

- Sections K, L, and M do not become part of the contract

Note: * ORCA = Online Representations & Certifications Application (http://orca.bpn.gov/)

Suggested Review Sequence

- Evaluation criteria – Section M

- Funding information, if available – Section G

- Instructions to offerors – Section L

- Work statement – Section C or in attachment

Build a Requirement Matrix

Solicitation Page	Requirement	Proposal Page	Response

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Pay Attention to Details

- Determine your eligibility – can you meet the evaluation criteria?
  - Past performance
  - Required experience
  - Skill sets
  - Set aside definitions
  - Production capability
  - Production capacity
  - Schedule and period of performance

Pay Attention to Details (Cont.)

- ## Administrative needs
  - – Reports
  - – Invoicing
- ## Will there be subcontracted work?
- ## Schedules and deadlines
- ## Make initial "propose / no-propose" decision
- ## Develop a requirements matrix
- ## Meet with your company team members and discuss the proposed project

Pay Attention to Details (Cont.)

- Instructions for proposal
  - Number of copies
  - Page limits (fold-outs, artwork, double columns)
  - Formats
  - Sequencing
  - Site visits – mandatory or non-mandatory
  - Pre-proposal conferences, including RSVP requirements
  - Deadline for questions to the contracting officer
  - Due dates and times
  - Type of paper, font size, bold & italics for fill-ins

Budgeting

- Develop an estimated proposal development budget

- Proposal costs are a "cost of doing business" and will not be recovered, especially if you don't win the contract

- Determine a "break-even" amount for your costs

- Make initial "propose / no-propose" decision

Meet with Your Team

- **Distribute copies of RFP for review before your meeting**

- **Discuss requirements**

- **Make a proposal development timeline**

- **Finalize proposal development budget**

- **Establish a team leader through whom all documents and revisions will clear**

Meet with Your Team (Cont.)

- Create subordinate teams if required

- Begin collecting questions, if any, for the contracting officer

- Determine if subcontractors will be needed

Prime's Input to Subcontractors

- Provide copies of the pertinent section(s) of the RFP to them

- Determine if exclusive agreements or non-disclosure agreement is desirable/needed

- Share proposal development schedule

- Establish deadline for their propose/no propose decision

Prime's Input to Subcontractors (Cont.)

- Establish a proposal deadline that allows for timely incorporation of their information in your final proposal

- Determine if subcontractor(s) will attend pre-proposal events and who will cover the costs

Make a Commitment

- Make your final "propose / no-propose" decision
  - We'll assume you decide to work the project
- You are committing your company's
  - Time
  - Money
  - Personnel
  - For many, an emotional investment, too
- Therefore, you *must* be fully invested in your success

✓Non-complex RFPs

Definition for the purposes of this class: Contractor is required to provide a firm-fixed price per unit and total pricing, and a brief description of the work to be accomplished in either a narrative or work breakdown structure (WBS). The contract will have a relatively short period of performance - one year or less. Total value will be less than $500 K and not subject to cost accounting standards. RFP may be for commercial services or commodities.

Define the Scope of Work

- ## For commodities
  - ### Manufactured
    - Material costs and schedules
    - Labor costs – remember the government expects your best rates
    - Review drawings
    - Administrative needs, i.e. billing, creation of shipping documents, status reports, scheduling inspections

Define the Scope of Work (Cont.)

- Commodities continued
  - Non-manufactured
    - Lead time from distribution source
    - Shipping issues – drop ship directly to final location, or sent to you and then to government customer
    - Administrative needs, i.e. billing, creation of shipping documents, status reports, scheduling inspections

Define the Scope of Work (Cont.)

- For services
  - Determine skill sets, including subcontracted work
  - Estimate number of hours required for each skill set, using the work statement as guidance
    - May want to establish a high, moderate and low range
  - Review rates for each skill set

Define the Scope of Work (Cont.)

- ## Services continued
    - Get subcontractors' billing rates and adjust for any markup that will be applied by your company
    - If past contract information is available, determine if the rates you will need to charge seem competitive, once you've adjusted for time, value of money, and scope (estimated number of hours for previous contract)

Define the Scope of Work (Cont.)

- ## For both commodities and services

  - ### *Sharpen your pencil!*

    - The government and its primes expect to be your most favored customer

    - Discount your commercial prices or rates

    - Don't assume you will be able to offer a reduction during negotiations. The contracting officer may make an award *without* conducting negotiations

Complete Your Proposal

- Attention to details
- Follow the format established by the government
- Fill in all required information
- Use a cover letter to describe what is included in your submittal
- Clearly mark and cross-reference any exhibits or attachments you create

Complete Your Proposal (Cont.)

- Create a glossary or definitions page if needed for acronyms and jargon
- Documents must be neat and legible
- Do not submit information that is not requested
- Ensure that your work descriptions are factual, as opposed to marketing information

Complete Your Proposal (Cont.)

- Check and double-check your math for your unit prices and total prices – awards are based on unit prices

- Do not submit cost breakdowns unless required by the solicitation

- Review your requirements matrix and annotate where in your proposal each requirement is addressed

- Verify information that appears in more than one location is consistent

Complete Your Proposal (Cont.)

- Verify that you have complied with any solicitation amendment requirements
- Submit required number of copies
- Submit on time using required method – fax, electronic, hard copy, or a combination with "wet" signature
- Use a trusted courier with tracking capability
  - Late proposals will not be considered unless you can prove that the government (at the agency - not the postal service) mishandled the document and caused it to be late

Prepare for Negotiation

- A communication process between the buyer and seller
- Exchanges with the intent of allowing the offeror to revise its proposal
- In negotiations we may discuss
  - Specific cost elements
  - Bottom line price
  - Contract type
  - Terms and conditions
  - Other non-cost or price factors

Prepare for Negotiation (Cont.)

- Negotiation Process Steps
  - Fact Finding
  - Prepare for Negotiation
  - Negotiation
  - Post Negotiation
    - Document results
    - Lessons learned
  - Contract Award

Conduct Negotiation

- Can be telephone or face-to-face
  - If face-to-face usually at government's site
- Government prepares agenda
- Government may use one person or team approach
- Opening statements
  - Verify negotiator's authority
  - Synopsis of requirement
  - Element-by-element discussions

Conduct Negotiation (Cont.)

- Prepare a "best and final offer" (BAFO)
  - Review all details as though this were the original proposal
  - Don't make assumptions about accuracy or completeness
  - Deadlines are usually short – submit on time

Conduct Negotiation (Cont.)

- Maintain open communications
  - Minimize "game-playing"
  - Stress cooperation

- The desired result at the conclusion of negotiations is a fair and reasonable price for both parties

- Document the results
  - The negotiation session
  - The agreements and disagreements

Request Debriefing

- If the contract is awarded to you
  - Your winning proposal's strengths
  - Your winning proposal's areas for improvement

- If the contract is not awarded to you
  - Within 10 days, request a debriefing
  - Proposal strengths and weaknesses

- Win or lose – create a "lessons learned" document with your team

✓Contract Awarded

- Attend post-award meeting, if any
  - Clarifications
  - Points of contact
- Begin performance
  - Excellent documentation
  - Safety
  - Quality
  - On time delivery or performance

Contract Awarded (Cont.)

- Administratively
  - Excellent documentation
  - Proactive communication with your contacts
  - *Perfect* invoicing procedures and documentation
    - Ensures timely payment

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✓Contract Close-out

- Verify that all deliverables have been accepted
- Receive government or prime's acceptance document
- Submit final invoice, including final invoices from subcontractors
- Sign any release forms
- Note document retention expiration date
- Create "lessons learned" document for contract file
- If you are the prime, check government website for past performance report submitted by government
  - Provide comments, if needed

Conclusion of Part 1

Check the Workshop Schedule and

Come back for Part 2 –

Responding to Complex RFPs

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Responding to RFPs* - Part 2

*Request for Proposal

Part 2 - Overview

- ✓ Complex RFPs
- ✓ Management Volume
- ✓ Technical Volume
- ✓ Cost Volume
- ✓ Editing activities
- ✓ Delivery to the government
- ✓ What happens next?
- ✓ Contract award announced

✓ Complex RFPs

Definition for the purposes of this class: Contractor is required to provide price as well as cost information and rates used to develop unit prices. A description of the work will be detailed. Sometimes the technical aspects of the proposal will be the contractor's independent and original solution to a stated requirement the government identifies. (cont. next slide)

Complex RFPs (Cont.)

This RFP may have a longer period of performance or delivery schedule. Total value of contract will range from $100,000 and up, but is generally a higher dollar value contract. Contractor may be subject to cost accounting standards. RFP may be for commercial products or services, but may involve an inventive application to solve a complex requirement.

Non-complex vs. Complex

In general, the steps for the "non-complex RFP", discussed in Part 1, remain the same for the "complex RFP". However, there are more instructions about the method of proposing and more specific information that must be included in the proposal

The "Basics" are the Same

- Follow the format
- Define the scope of work
- Complete your proposal
- Prepare for negotiation
- Conduct negotiation
- Prepare "best and final" offer
- Request debriefing
- Perform contract
- Close-out contract

✓Follow the Format

- Instructions about how to submit cost data
  - In a separate volume
  - In an electronic format
- Electronic data compatibility information
- Structured formats, i.e. tables or matrices
- Past project description format
- Résumé format
- Past performance information format
- Required registrations or certifications

Your Team Meeting

- Discuss need, if any, for subcontractors
  - If you are a "large business" prime contractor on a federal project, is a Subcontracting Plan required? ($500 K or $1million for construction)
- Review any proprietary issues and how they will be handled within the proposal
- Review any actual or potential legal issues – seek counsel, as needed
- Plan for pre-proposal events and ensure RSVP is made
- Regular check-in with team members – for some teams, daily is recommended

Establish a War Room

- May be an actual or virtual war room
  - Shared files – develop a file plan
  - Read/write privileges
  - Passwords?
  - Keep all work! Even that which you will reject
    - Future revisions
    - Negotiation alternatives
    - Alternate proposals
    - Post award – change orders
    - Proof of work, if required, for legal purposes

✓ Develop a Strategy

- What are the major issues that must be addressed and developed?

- What are the features of your product or service?

- What are the benefits derived from the features of your product or service?

- What creates a distinction between you and your competitors?

- Why should the government choose YOU instead of your competitors?

Develop a Strategy (Cont.)

- What strategy or theme will you use for
    - The proposal as a whole

    - Each volume (management, technical, cost)

    - Each major section within each volume, including volume summaries and an Executive Summary

    - Determine the relative time and space devoted to each section, based on the "weight" assigned to each section for evaluation purposes

Develop a Strategy (Cont.)

- Your goal is to explain to the government why you have the winning proposal
  - You must win in each volume and section by being clear about how your solutions will be implemented
- "Freeze" your concept to ensure consistency between your departments and volume writers
- Select one editor who finalizes all text to ensure
  - Consistent content
  - Consistent format
  - One "voice"

✓Management Volume

- **Basic RFP document**
  - All "fill-ins" completed
  - Subcontracting plan, if required
    - Large business
    - >$500K or Construction >$1 million
- **Corporate history**
- **Organizational chart**

Management Volume (Cont.)

- Past performance information (or it may be required in the Technical Volume)
  - Previous contract numbers or project names
  - Customers and points of contact with phone numbers
  - Project description
- Key personnel to be assigned and duties
- Resumes of key personnel

Management Volume (Cont.)

- Description of project management system and controls
  - Purchasing
  - Budget management
  - Daily/weekly progress reports
  - Safety
  - Inspections
  - Quality
  - Subcontract management

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NASA

✓Technical Volume

- This section must demonstrate how the project management system is utilized
- Acknowledgement of each technical task
- Proposed sequencing of tasks
- Proposed schedule
- Responsible party for each task
- Detailed description of how each task will be accomplished

Technical Volume (Cont.)

- Description of coordination with government team

- Detailed description of subcontractors' tasks

- Documentation processes

- If required, complete a sample task or problem exercise

- If required, describe close-out and/or transfer (follow-on contract) tasks

Technical Volume (Cont.)

- If the RFP indicates that oral presentations will be made during the negotiation by those who provide proposals in the "competitive range", begin developing an outline for your presentation

Technical Volume (Cont.)

- What is "competitive range"?

  "Agencies shall evaluate all proposals and, if discussions are to be conducted, establish the competitive range. Based on the ratings of each proposal against all evaluation criteria, the contracting officer shall establish a competitive range comprised of all of the most highly rated proposals, unless the range is further reduced for purposes of efficiency." FAR 15.306(c)(1)

Technical Volume (Cont.)

- Oral presentations
  - Time limited
  - Some allow for questions from audience, others do not
  - Some competitors hire professional speakers to "perform" their presentation, depending on budget and criticality involved (this is NOT a recommendation!)

✓Cost Volume

- Understand your company's bookkeeping and accounting system for accurate, current, and complete cost proposal preparation

- Separate *your* company's costs from your subcontractors' quote

Cost Volume (Cont.)

- Terminology review
  - Price
  - Cost
  - Rate
  - Overhead
  - G&A (General & Administrative)
  - Profit
  - Fee
  - GAAP (Generally accepted accounting principles)

Cost Volume (Cont.)

- Develop a detailed proposal

- Review your cost volume to ensure each task has been accounted for, all indirect labor (i.e. administrative support) is considered, indirect supplies (copier paper for reports) have been included

- Consider any travel expenses required by the contractual requirements

Cost Volume (Cont.)

- This section is usually completed last
  - All staff need to remain available to coordinate with cost volume developer(s)
  - Set deadlines to ensure the cost volume completions won't be the factor that kills your chance of submitting a proposal on-time

✓Editing Activities

- Spell check – don't trust the computer
- Proofread
  - Grammar, usage, spelling ("spell check" leaves "air oars")
  - Content and sequence
  - Responsiveness - use your requirements matrix
  - Page numbers
- Create "one voice"

Editing Activities (Cont.)

- Design and prepare
  - Cover letter
  - Table of contents
  - Index
  - Glossary
  - Volume covers
  - Tabs, dividers
  - Mailing labels

Editing Activities (Cont.)

- Final review of original
- Printing of copies (per RFP instructions)
- Check copies for quality, correctness, completeness and sequence
- Final assembly – time for this is often underestimated!
- Final review of <u>each</u> copy
  - Correct order
  - No missing pages
  - All additional materials inserted

✓Delivery to Government

- Package and label per instructions
- Verify your address label matches instructions in RFP
- Ensure that the package with the "original" document is identified

Delivery to Government (Cont.)

- Determine mode of transportation
  - Mail
    - Shipper
    - Insurance
    - Request receipt
    - Some shipments will cost more if they require delivery to the desk of a government official located on a government installation that has a mailroom

Delivery to Government (Cont.)

– Hand delivery

  - Local
    - Ensure enough time is allowed for any traffic problems
    - Ensure proposal is logged in and date/time stamped

  - Distance
    - Allow adequate travel time to cover unforeseen delays, such as cancelled flights or weather
    - Do not check proposal and copies with baggage
    - Ensure proposal is logged in and date/time stamped

✓What Happens Next?

- **Preparation for negotiations**
  - Review submittals
  - Respond to requests for clarification or fact-finding
  - Provide oral presentation, if invited
- **Conduct negotiations**

What Happens Next? (Cont.)

- Prepare "best and final offer" (BAFO)
- Submit BAFO – usually a short response time

✓Contract Award Announced

- If you win
  - Celebrate!
  - Request a debriefing
  - Attend post-award conference, if any
  - Create a lessons-learned file

- If you lose
  - Request a debriefing
  - Create a lessons-learned file

Helpful Websites

- Federal Business Opportunities
  - http://www.fedbizopps.gov./
  - Go to "Find Business Opportunities" link
- Small Business Administration (SBA)
  - http://www.sba.gov/
- Central Contractor Registration (CCR)
  - http://www.ccr.gov
- Dun and Bradstreet
  - http://www.dnb.com

Helpful Websites (Cont.)

- JPL Home Page
  - http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/

- JPL Acquisition Division
  - http://acquisition.jpl.nasa.gov/default.htm

- JPL Business Opportunities Office
  - http://acquisition.jpl.nasa.gov/boo

- JPL Terms and Conditions
  - http://acquisition.jpl.nasa.gov/e2000.htm

Helpful Websites (Cont.)

- **JPL Forecasts**
  - http://acquisition.jpl.nasa.gov/boo/forecast 2000.htm
- **JPL RFPs**
  - http://acquisition.jpl.nasa.gov/rfp/
- **NASA**
  - http://www.nasa.gov/
- **Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR)**
  - http://farsite.hill.af.mil/vffara.htm
  - http://www.acqnet.gov/far/
- **NASA FAR Supplement**
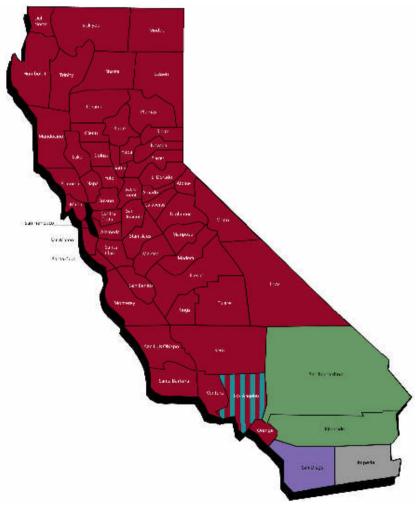 - http://farsite.hill.af.mil/vfnasaa.htm

The FTC

- Not-for-profit organization public benefit corporation

- Promotes economic development by helping small businesses successfully compete for federal, state, and local government contracts

The FTC Service Area

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Services from The FTC

- One-to-one Counseling - free

- Certification Information - free

- Bid-Matching Service - $199 a year

- Training - free

- Assistance with GSA Schedules - free

The FTC Staff

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How to Reach The FTC

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Thank You!

Questions?
Comments?